An order for publike Prayers to be vsed on Wednesdayes and Fridayes in every Parish Church within the Province of Canterbury, conuenient for this present time.

Set forth by authoritie.

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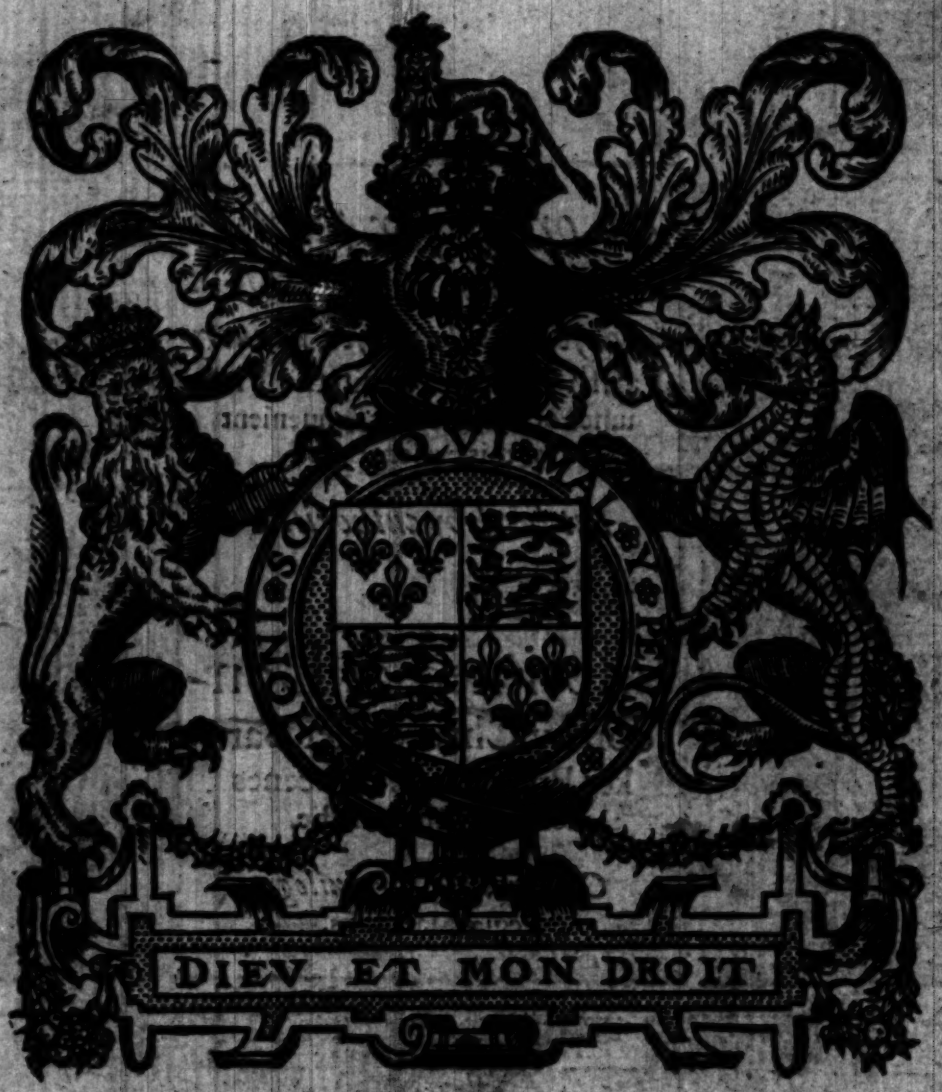
Cum gratia & Priuilegio Regiæ Maiestatis.

FIDES

VMILITAS


DIEV ET MON DROIT

The Preface.

HE fatherly care and goodnesse which Almightie God by his Prophetes in many places declared vnto his people, neuer appeared more abundantly toward any nation, then of late yeeres it hath done toward this Realme of England. For when we were in thraldome and captiuitie vnder the tyrannie of Rome, & caried away with the false worshipping of God, he, by our gracious Souereigne, deliuered vs: he planted the elect & chosen vine of his gospel amōg vs, by law & authoritie: he raised vp seruants to digge & delue about this vineyard that it might prosper: he hath cōtinually fenced vs from our enemies on all sides, by his gracious & mightie prouidence: beyond the reache of mans policie he hath reuealed their conspiracies, defeated their purposes, and made frustrate their counsels & deuises: he hath erected a watch tower of wise and godly gouernment: he hath shed downe from heauen, and blessed vs with his manifold graces, aswel of spirituall gifts, as of all plentie of earthly creatures. And for these his manifolde benefites, he hath looked for some fruites at our handes according to our dueties, that his name by our good doings might be glorified: but as the worlde seeth, & our owne consciences accuse vs, we haue yeelded little other then sower & vnsauorie grapes, vnpleasant vnto God, and mouing him to wrath towarde vs, that is, contempt of his word, worldly securitie, infidelitie, hipocrisie, vsing religion only for a shewe, and dishonoring the name of God and profession of the Gospell in deede, with the practise of all maner of wickednesse. Seeing therefore his mercie & goodnes wil not allure vs, the Arme of his iustice will be stretched out a-

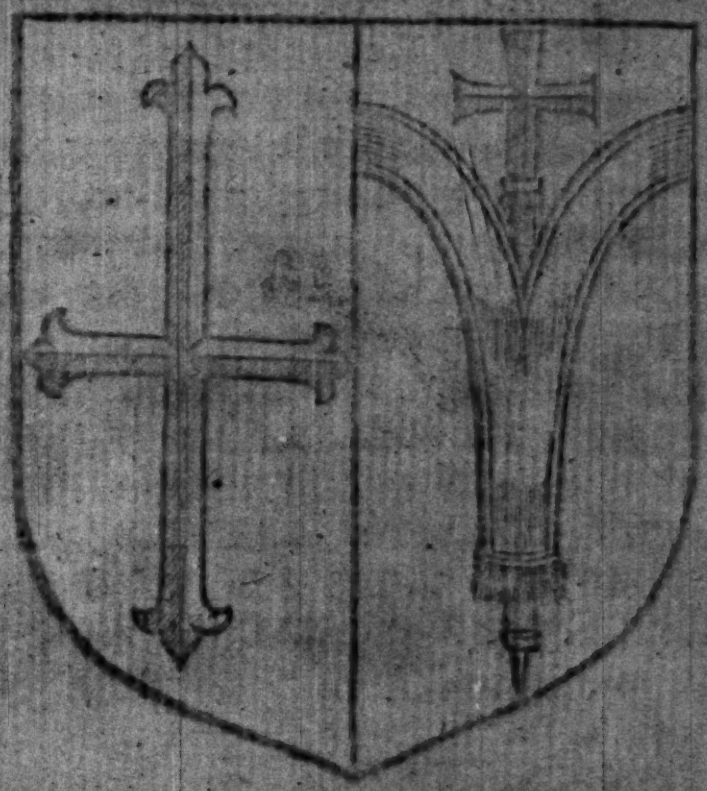
gainst vs: For he can abide nothing lesse then the contempt of his worde and mercifull calling. Remember the wordes of God vttered by Ieremie the Prophete in the 7. Chapter, *Because you haue done all these workes, and I rose vp early and spake vnto you, but when I spake, you woulde not heare, neither when I called, would ye answere: Therefore will I do vnto this house, whereupon my Name is called, wherein also ye trust, euen to the place which I gaue to you, and to your fathers, as I haue done to Silo, and I wil cast you out of my sight, as I haue cast out all your brethren, &c.* Let vs therefore remember our selues in time, & call vpon God with earnest repentance, before he turne his face cleane from vs: let vs followe the good counsell of the blessed Prophet Esay, *Seeke the Lorde while he may be founde, call vpon him while he is nigh vs: let the wicked man forsake his wicked wayes, and the euill man his naughtie cogitations, and returne vnto the Lord, & he will haue mercie vpon vs. Let vs returne vnto God: for he is ready to forgiue.* Yea, God himselfe calleth vs by the prophet Ioel: *Turne vnto the Lorde* (saith he) *with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning, rent your hearts and not your clothes, & turne vnto the Lord your God: For he is gracious & merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindnes, & repenteth him of the euill that he hath purposed.* Let vs therefore imbrace the mercie of God while it is offred: he hath not yet stretched out his arme against vs: only as a merciful father he hath shaken the rod of his iustice toward vs, to wake vs out of the deepe slumber of our securitie. The Lord God graunt, that in time we may take warning thereby, and not harden our hearts, and make stiffe our neckes against our gracious God. These are therfore in the feare of God to charge the watchmen of the Lords citie, diligently & carefully to sounde the Trumpet in Sion, to gather the people together, to teach them in sackcloth & ashes to repent, to will them inwardly to rent their hearts and not outwardly

Cap. 55.

wardly their garments onely: ſanctifie the congregation, aſſemble the elders, cal the yong ones, & euen thoſe that ſucke the breaſt. Let the bridegrome & his ſpouſe, let them that liue in delicacie and pleaſure of this life, in what ſtate or condition ſoeuer they be, high or low, caſt away their mirth & ſolace, and come and weepe & crie with bitter repentance before the mightie God, ſaying, Spare thy people (O Lord) and giue not thine heritage & beloued vineyard into reproch, that the wicked ſeed of Antichriſt rule ouer it. Let not the enemies of thy truth, ſay among theſelues, Where is now their God, in whom they haue put their truſt? Then vndoubtedly wil the Lord be ielous ouer this land, and ſpare his people, yea the Lord will anſwere, and ſay vnto his people, Beholde I wil ſend you corne, and wine, and oyle, and you ſhall be ſatisfied therewith, and I wil no more make you a reproch among mine enemies, and I wil remoue farre from you the Northerne armie, that is, the Antichriſtian power, and I wil driue him into a land barren and deſolate, with his face toward the Eaſt ſea, and his ende to the vttermoſt ſea, & his ſtinke ſhal come vp, and his corruption ſhall aſcende, becauſe he hath exalted himſelfe againſt the truth of God. Feare not (O land) but be glad and reioyce, for the Lord wil doe great things for thee. This godly admonition was giuen to the princes, prieſts and people, with great zeale and earneſtnes by Ioel the prophet in the dayes of that good king *Ezechiah*, and is the only way to turne away the wrath of God from vs, and to obtaine the continuance of his gracious goodnes toward vs, & his diuine protection ouer vs, in al our difficulties and diſtreſſes.

That therefore this admonition or exhortation may take the better effectes in mens hearts, it is ordered and ſtreightly charged, that in euery pariſh where there is a preacher allowed by the Ordinarie, that euery Sunday

in ſome publike Sermon, he ſhall put the people in remembrance of Gods exceeding benefites & bleſſings beſtowed vpon vs theſe many yeres, & of our vnthankful receiuing & vſing of the ſame, & exhort them to ſincere & true repentance, & that in ſuch ſort, as they declare the inward affection of their hearts, with the outward exerciſes of prayer, faſting, and almes deedes, that the world may teſtifie & ſee that they truely returne to their Lord God. In other places where ſuch ſufficient & diſcreete preachers be not, the Miniſters vpon the ſame daies ſhal reade ſome part of theſe Homilies folowing, diſtinctly and reuerently, that the people may be moued thereby to the effect of that which is before mentioned. Moreouer, vpon the Wedneſdayes and Frydayes, the Miniſters in euery pariſh ſhal ſay Diuine ſeruice morning and euening in ſuch ſort, as hereafter foloweth. At which Seruice, one of euery houſe in the pariſh ſhall be preſent. And if either the Miniſters ſhalbe negligent in doing their dueties appoynted vnto them in this ſeruice, or the people diſobedient in comming or reſorting to this godly exerciſe, the Churchwardens and other diſcreete men of the Pariſh are required to complaine thereof vnto the Ordinary, that the ſlacknesse of eche partie may be corrected. The people alſo at eche time of aſſemblie would be admoniſhed, to make their charitable contribution to the reliefe of the poore, at the leaſt according to the order of the Statute.



The order of this Booke.

FIrst, the Confession, as it is in the Booke of Common prayer, with some one or two of the sentences of Scripture set before the same.

Then two or three of these Psalmes following in order.

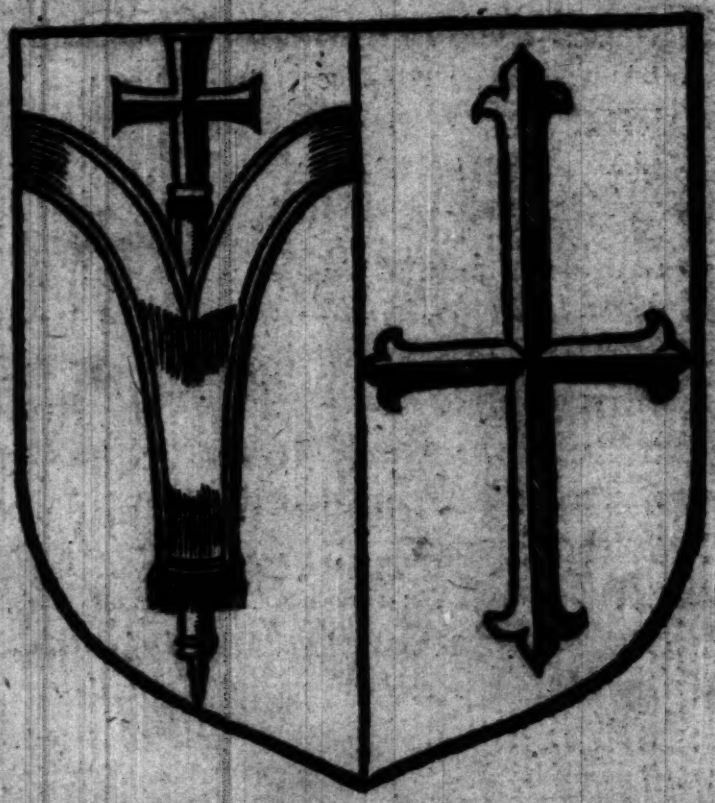
Psalm. vi. x. xxv. } { xxxi. xxxiiii. xxxvii.
xxxviii. xli. li. } { cxii. cxliii. cxlv.

Then some one of these Chapters following.

Esai. v. lviii. lix. lxv.
Ezechiel. xviii.
Zachar. vii.
Joel. i. ii.
Jonas. iii.
Luke. xvi. xvi.
Matthew. xv.
i. John. iii.

Then the Lecanie, with the prayer appoynted to be sayde in the time of dearth and famine: and the next Prayer following for the time of Warre.

And if there be a conuenient nomber of hearers vpon any of the workedayes in the Church, then one of these Homilies may bee read, if there be no Sermon.



There is nothing that the holy Ghost doeth so much labour in all the Scriptures to beare vnto men, then of repentance, & amendement of life, and therebie returning vnto the Lorde God of hosts. Also no wonder, for we do daily & heinouslie by our wicked liues & vnkeepe disobedience, bore vnto God, therebie purchasing vnto our selues (if he should deale with vs according to his iustice) eternall damnacion. So that no doctrine is so necessary in the Church of God, as is the doctrine of repentance & amendement of life. And verie the true preachers of the Gospel of the kingdome of heaven, and the glad and joyfull tidings of salvacion, have at times in their godlie lectures and preachings vnto the people, learned vnto them repentance, & amendement of life, & remission & forgiuenes of sinnes, even as our Saviour Jesus Christ did amongst them selfe, saying, So it behoued Christ to suffer, and to rise again the third day, and that repentance and forgiuenes of sinnes should be preached in his name among all nations. And therefore the holie Apostle doeth in the Actes speake after this maner: I have witnessed both to the Jewes and to the Gentiles, the repentance towardes God, and faith towardes our Lorde Jesus Christ. Did not John Baptist, Zacharias sonne, beginne his ministerie with the doctrine of repentance, saying, Repent, for the kingdome of God is at hande? The like doctrine did our Saviour Jesus Christ preache him selfe,

The doctrine of repentance is most necessarie.

Luke 14.

Actes. 20.

Matth. 3.

Matth. 4.

and commanded his Apostles to preach the same.

I might here alleadge very many places out of the Prophetes, in the which this most wholesome doctrine of repentance is very earnestly vrged, as most needefull for all degrees and orders of men, but one shalbe sufficient at this present time.

Joel.2. These are the words of Joel the Prophet. Therefore also nowe the Lorde sayeth, Returne vnto me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning, rent your hearts and not your clothes, and returne vnto the Lorde your God, for hee is gratious and merciful, slowe to anger, and of great compassion, and readie to pardon wickednesse. Whereby it is giuen vs to vnderstande, that we haue here a perpetuall rule appoynted vnto vs, which ought to bee obseruied and kept at all times, and that there is none other way whereby the wrath of God may bee pacified, and his anger assuaged, that the fiercenesse of his furie, and the plagues or destruction, which by his righteous iudgement hee hath determined to bring vpon vs, may depart, bee remoued and taken away. Where he sayth, But nowe therefore, sayth the Lorde, returne vnto mee: It is not without great importance, that the Prophet speaketh so. For hee had afore set foorth at large vnto them, the horrible vengeance of God, which no man was able to abide, and therefore hee doeth moue them to repentance, to obtaine mercie, as if hee shoulde say, I will not haue these thinges to be so taken, as though there were no hope of grace left. For although yee doe by your sinnes deserue to bee vtterly destroyed, & God by his righteous iudgementes hath determined to bring no final destruction vpon you, yet nowe that ye are in a maner on the very edge of the sworde, if

A perpetuall rule which all must followe.

ye

he will speedily returne vnto him, he wil most gently and most mercifully receiue you into fauour againe. Whereby we are admonished, that repentance is neuer too late, so that it be true and earnest. For sith that God in the Scriptures will be called our Father, doubtlesse he doeth followe the nature and propertie of gentle and merciful fathers, which seeke nothing so much, as the returning againe, and amendement of their children, as Christ doeth abundantly teache in the Parable of the prodigall sonne. Doeth not the Lorde himselfe say by the Prophete, I will not the death of the wicked, but that hee turne from his wicked wayes and liue? And in another place, If wee confesse our sinne, God is faithfull and righteous to forgiue vs our sinnes, and to make vs cleane from all wickednes. Which most comfortable promises are confirmed by many examples of the scriptures. When the Iewes did willingly receiue and embrace the wholesome counsell of the Prophet Esai, God by & by did reach his helping hand vnto them, and by his angel, did in one night slaye the most worthie and valiaunt souldiers of Sennacheribs campe. Whereunto may king Manasses be added, who after all maner of damnable wickednesse, returned vnto the Lord, and therefore was heard of him, and restored againe into his kingdome. The same grace and fauour did the sinnefull woman Magdalene, Zacheus, the poore theefe, and many other feele. All which thinges ought to serue for our comfort against the temptations of our consciences, whereby the deuill goeth about to shake, or rather to ouerthrowe our faith. For euery one of vs ought to applie the same vnto himselfe, and say, Yet now returne vnto the Lord: neither let the remembrance

Luke.15.
Ezech.18.
Esai.1.
1.Iohn.1.
Esai.37.
2.Par.33.
Luke.7.16.

of thy former life discourage thee, yea the more wicked that it hath bene, the more feruent and earnest let thy repentance or returning be, and forthwith thou shalt feele the eares of the Lord wide open vnto thy prayers. But let vs more narrowly looke vpon the commandement of the Lorde touching this matter. Turne vnto me (sayeth he by his Prophete Joel) with all your hearts, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rent your hearts & not your garments, &c. In which wordes, he comprehendeth all manner of things that can be spoken of repentance, which is a returning againe of the whole man vnto God, from whome we be fallen away by sinne. But that the whole discourse thereof may the better be borne away, wee shall first consider in order foure principall poynts, that is, from what wee must returne, to whom we must returne, by whom we may be able to conuert, and the maner howe to turne to God.

From whence we must returne. Esa.49.

First, from whence, or from what thinges wee must returne. Truely we must returne from those thinges, wherebye wee haue bene withdrawen, plucke, & led away from God. And these generally are our sinnes, which as the holy Prophet Esai doeth testifie, doth separate God and vs, and hide his face, that he will not heare vs. But vnder the name of sinne, not onely those grosse wordes and deedes, which by the common iudgement of men, are cofted to be filthie and vnlawfull, and so consequently abominable sinnes: but also the filthie lusts and inwarde concupiscences of the flesh, which (as S. Paul testifieth) do resist the will and spirit of God, and therfore ought earnestly to be bridled and kept vnder. We must repent of the false and erroneous opinions that we haue had of God, and the wicked

Gal.5.

superstition

superstition that doeth breede of the same, the bri-
lawfull worshipping and seruice of God, and other
like. All these things must they forsake, that will
truely turne vnto the Lord and repent aright. For
sith that for such things the wrath of God commeth Ephe. 5.
vpon the children of disobedience, no end of punish-
ment ought to be looked for, as long as we continue
in such things. Therefore they be here condemned,
which will seeme to bee repentant sinners, and yet
will not forsake their Idolatrie and superstition.
Secondly, we must see vnto whom we ought to re- Vnto whom
turne. Reuertimini vsque ad me, saith the Lord: that we ought to
is, Returne as farre as vnto mee. We must then re- returne.
turne vnto the Lorde, yea wee must returne vnto
him alone: For he alone is the truth, and the foun-
taine of all goodnesse. But we must labour that we
doe returne as farre as vnto him, and that we doe
neuer cease nor rest till wee haue apprehended and
taken holde vpon him. But this must bee done by
faith. For sith that God is a spirit, he can by no other
meane be apprehended & taken holde vpon. Wherefore,
first they doe greatly erre, which doe not turne
vnto God, but vnto the creatures, or vnto the in-
uentions of men, or vnto their owne merites. Se-
condly, they that doe beginne to returne vnto the By whome we
Lord, and doe staynt in the mid way, afore they come must returne
to the marke that is appointed vnto them. Thirdly, vnto God.
because we haue of our owne selues nothing to pre-
sent vs to God, and we do kille vs from him, after
our fall, then our first parents Adam and Eua, which whē
hee had sinned, did seeke to hide themselues from the
sight of God, wee haue neede of a mediatour for to
bring & reconcile vs vnto him, who for our sinnes
is angry with vs. The same is Iesus Christ, who
being true and naturall God, equal and of one sub-

stance with the Father, did at the time appoynted take vpon him our fraile nature, in the blessed Virgins wombe, and that of her vndefiled substance, that so he might be a mediatour betweene God and vs, and pacifie his wrath. Of him doeth the father himselfe speake from heauen, saying, This is my welbeloued Sonne, in whome I am well pleased. And he himselfe in his Gospel doth cry out and say, I am the way, the trueth, and the life, no man commeth vnto the Father but by mee. For he alone did with the sacrifice of his body and blood, make satisfaction vnto the iustice of God for our sinnes. The Apostles do testifie, that he was exalted, for to giue repentance and remission of sinnes vnto Israel. Both which thinges he himselfe did command to be preached in his name. Therefore they are greatly deceiued that preach repentance without Christ, & teach the simple & ignorant that it consisteth onely in the works of men. They may in deede speake many things of good workes, & of amendement of life and maners: but without Christ they be all vayne and vnprofitable. They that thinke that they haue done much of themselues towards repentance, are so much more the farther from God, because that they do seeke those things in their owne works and merites, which ought only to be sought in our Sauiour Iesus Christ, and in the merits of his death, passion, and bloodshedding. Fourthly, this holy Prophet Ioel doeth liuely expresse the manner of this our returning or repentance, comprehending all the inwarde and outwarde thinges that may be here obserued. First he will haue vs to returne vnto God with our whole heart, whereby hee doeth remoue and put away all hypocrisie, least the same might iustly be sayd vnto vs: This people draweth

Matth.3.

Iohn.14.
Iohn.1.
1.Pet.1.

Acte.5.
Luke.24.

Iohn.15.

The maner of our returning.

Esa.29.
Matth.15.

neere

meere vnto me with their mouth, and worship mee with their lippes, but their heart is farre off from me. Secondly, he requireth a sincere and pure loue of godlinesse, and of the true worshipping and seruice of God, that is to say, that forsaking all maner of thinges that are repugnant and contrary vnto Gods will, wee doe giue our hearts vnto him, and all the whole strength of our bodies and soules, according to that which is written in the lawe: Thou shalt loue the Lord thy God with al thy heart, with all thy soule, and with all thy strength. Here therefore nothing is left vnto vs, that we may giue vnto the worlde, and vnto the lustes of the flesh. For sith that the heart is the fountaine of all our woorkes, as many as doe with their whole heart turne vnto the Lorde, doe liue vnto him onely. Neither doe they yet repent truely, that halting on both sides, do other whiles obey God, but by and by do thinke, that laying him aside, it is lawful for them to serue the worlde and the flesh. And because that wee are letted by the naturall corruption of our owne flesh, and the wicked affections of the same, he doth bidde vs also to returne with fasting: not thereby vnderstanding a superstitious abstinence and choosing of meates, but a true discipline or taming of the flesh, whereby the nourishmentes of filthie lustes, and of stubburne contumacie and pride, may bee withdrawen and plucke a way from it. Whereunto hee doeth adde weeping and mourning, which doe conteyne an outwarde profession of repentance, which is very needefull and necessarie, that so wee may partly set foorth the righteousnesse of God, when by such meanes wee doe testifie that wee deserued punishments at his handes, & partly stop the offence that was openly giuen vnto the weake.

Deut. 6.

Halting on both sides.

Psalme 25.

This did Dauid see, who being not content to haue bewept and bewailed his sinnes priuately, woulde publikely in his Psalmes declare and set forth the righteousnes of God, in punishing sinne, and also staye them that might haue abused his example to sinne the more boldly. Therefore they are farthest from true repentance, that will not confesse and acknowledge their sinnes, nor yet bewayle them, but rather do most vngodly glory and reioyce in them. Nowe least any man should thinke that repentance doeth consist in outward weeping and mourning only, he doeth rehearse that wherein the chiefe of the whole matter doeth lie, when he

Psalme 52.

sayth: Rent your hearts, and not your garments, and turne vnto the Lorde your God. For the people of the East part of the worlde were wont to rent their garmentes, if any thing had happened vnto

Hypocrites do counterfaite all maner of things.

thē that seemed intollerable. This thing dyd hypocrites sometime counterfayte & folow, as though the whole repentance dyd stande in such outwarde gesture. Hee teacheth them, that another maner of thing is required, that is, that they must bee contrite in their heartes, that they must vtterly detest and abhorre sinnes, & being at defiance with them, returne vnto the Lord their God, from whom they went away before. For God hath no pleasure in the outwarde ceremonie, but requireth a contrite and

Psalme 52.

humble heart, which he wil neuer despise, as Dauid doeth testifie. There is therefore none other vse to these outwarde ceremonies, but as farre foorth as we are stirred vp by them, and doe serue to the glory of God, and to the edifying of other.

Howe repentance is not vnprofitable.

Nowe doeth he adde vnto this doctrine or exhortation, certaine godly reasons, which hee doeth ground vpon the nature and propertie of God, and

whereby

whereby he doeth teache, that true repentance can neuer be vnprofitable or vnfruitefull. For as in all other things mens heartes doe quaile and faynt, if they once perceiue that they trauell in vaine: Euen so most specially in this matter, must we take heede and beware that we suffer not our selues to be perswaded that all that we doe is but labour lost: For thereof eyther sudden desperation doeth arise, or a licencious boldnesse to sinne, which at length bringeth vnto desperation. Least any such thing then should happen vnto them, he doeth certifie them of the grace & goodnesse of God, who is alwayes most ready to receyue them into fauour againe, that turne speedily vnto him. Which thing hee doeth proue with the same titles wherewith God doeth describe and set forth himselfe vnto Moses, speaking on this maner: For he is gratious and merciful, slowe to anger, of great kindenesse, and repenteth him of the euill, that is, such a one as is sorie for your afflictions. First he calleth him gentle and gratious, as hee who of his owne nature is more prompt and readie to doe good, then to punish. Whereunto this saying of Esaias the Prophet seemeth to perteyne, where he sayeth, Let the wicked forsake his way, and the vnrighteous his owne imaginations, and returne vnto the Lord, and he will haue pitie on him, and to our God, for he is very readie to forgiue. Secondly, he doeth attribute vnto him mercie, or rather (according to the Hebrewe worde) the bowels of mercies: whereby hee signified the natural affections of parents towards their children. Which thing Dauid doeth set forth goodly, saying, As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that feare him, for he knoweth whereof we be made, he

Exod.34.

Esai.55.

Psal.103.

remembreth that wee are but dust. Thirdly, hee saieth, that he is slowe to anger, that is to say, long suffering, and which is not lightly prouoked to wrath. Fourthly, that he is of much kindnesse, for he is that bottomlesse well of all goodnesse, who reioyceth to do good vnto vs. Therefore did he create and make men, that hee might haue whome hee shoulde doe good vnto, and make partakers of his heauenly richesse. Fifthly, hee repenteth of the euill, that is to say, he doeth call backe againe, and reuoke the punishment which hee had threatned, when he seeth men repent, turne, and amende.

These thinges being considered, let vs earnestly pray vnto the liuing God our heauenly Father, that he will vouchsafe by his holy Spirit, to worke a true and vnfayned repentance in vs, that after the paynefull labours and trauels of this life, wee may liue eternally with his sonne Iesus Christ, to whom bee all prayse and glory for euer and euer. Amen.

THE life which wee liue in this worlde, (good Christian people) is of the free benefite of God lent vs, yet not to vse it at our pleasure after our owne fleshly will: But to trade ouer the same, in those workes which are beseeming them that are become newe creatures in Christ. These works ye Apostle calleth good workes, saying, We are Gods workemanshippe created in Christ Iesu to good works, which God hath ordeined that wee should walke in them. S. Paul teacheth, that we must doe good workes for diuers respects. First to shewe our selues obedient children vnto our heauēly father, who hath ordeined them, that we should walke in them. Secondly, for that they are good declarations and testimonies of our iustification. Thirdly, that others seeing our good workes, may the rather by them be stirred vp, and excited to glorifie our father which is in heauen. Let vs not therefore be slacke to do good works, seeing it is the will of God that wee shoulde walke in them, assuring our selues that at the last day euery man shal receiue of God for his labour done in true faith, a greater rewarde then his workes can deserue.

Ephes. 2.

August. de fide & operibus. Cap. 4.

And because somewhat shall nowe bee spoken of one particular good worke, whose commendation is both in the law, and in the Gospel: thus much is said in the beginning generally of all good works, to take away (so nigh as may bee) from enuious mindes and slaunderous tongues, all iust occasion of slaunderous speaking, as though good workes were reiected. This good worke which now shalbe

intreated of, is fasting, which is found in the scriptures to be of two sortes. The one outward, perteining to the bodye, the other inwarde, in the heart and minde. This outwarde fast, is an abstinence from meate, drinke, and all natural foode, yea from all delicious pleasures and delectations worldly. When this outward fast perteineth to one particular man, or to a fewe, and not to the whole nomber of the people, for causes which hereafter shall be declared, then it is called a priuate fast: But when the whole multitude of men, women, and children, in a towneship or Citie, yea though a whole countrey doe fast, it is called a publike fast. Such was that fast which the whole multitude of the children of Israel were commaunded to keepe the tenth day of the seuenth moneth, because almightie God appoynted that day to be a cleansing day, a day of an atonement, a time of reconciliation, a day wherein the people were cleansed from their sinnes. The order and maner howe it was done, is written in the xvi. and xxiii. Chapter of Leuiticus. That daye the people did lament, mourne, weepe, & bewayle their former sinnes. And whosoeuer vpon that day did not humble his soule, bewayling his sinnes, as is sayd, abstayning from all bodily foode, vntill the euening: that soule (sayth almightie God) should be destroyed from among his people. We doe not reade that Moses ordeyned by order of lawe, any dayes of publique fast throughout the whole yeere, more then that one day. The Iewes notwithstanding had more times of common fasting, which the Prophet Zacharie reciteth, to be the fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seuenth, and the fast of the tenth moneth. But for that it appeareth not in the Leuiticall law, when they were instituted,

Leui. 16. & 23.

Zach. 8.

stituted, it is to be iudged that those other times of fasting, more then the fast of the seuenth moneth, were ordeyned among the Iewes, by the appoynt-ment of their gouernours, rather of deuotion, then by any open commaundement giuen from God. Vpon the ordinance of this generall fast good men tooke occasiõ to appoynt to thẽselues priuate fasts, at such time as they did either earnestly lament & bewaile their sinfull liues, or did addict themselues to more feruent prayer, that it might please God to turne his wrath from them, whẽ either they were admonished and brought to the consideration ther-of, by the preaching of the Prophets, or otherwise, when they sawe present danger to hang ouer their heads. This sorowfulnesse of heart, ioyned with fa-sting, they vttered sometime by their outwarde be-hauiour, and gesture of body, putting on sackcloth, sprinckling themselues with ashes and dust, and sitting, or lying vpon the earth. For when good men feele in themselues the heauie burden of sinne, see damnation to be the reward of it, and behold with the eye of their minde the horror of hell: they trem-ble, they quake, and are inwardly touched with so-rowfulnesse of heart for their offences, and can not but accuse themselues, and open this their griefe vnto Almightie God, and call vnto him for mercy. This being done seriously, their minde is so occu-pied, partly with sorowe & heauinesse, partly with an earnest desire, to be deliuered from this danger of hell and damnation, that all lust of meate and drinke is layde apart, and loathsomnes of al world-ly thinges and pleasures commeth in place, so that nothing then liketh men more, then to weepe, to lament, to mourne, and both with wordes and be-hauiour of body, to shew themselues wearie of this

life. Thus did Dauid fast, when he made intercession to Almightie God for the childes life begotten in adulterie of Bethsabe, Uries wife. King Achab fasted after this sort, when it repented him of murthering of Naboth, and bewayled his owne sinfull doings. Such was the Ninevites fast, brought to repentance by Jonas preaching. When xl. thousand of the Israelites were slayne in battel against the Benjamites, the Scripture sayth: All the children of Israel, and the whole multitude of people went out to Bethel, and sate there weeping before the Lorde, and fasted all that day vntill night. So did Daniel, Hester, Nehemias, and many others in the olde Testament fast. But if any man wil say, it is true, so they fasted in deede, but we are not now vnder that yoke of the Lawe, we are set at libertie by the freedome of the Gospell, therefore those rites and customes of the olde Law binde not vs, except it can be shewed by the Scriptures of the newe Testament, or by examples out of the same, that fasting now vnder the Gospel, is a restreynt of meat, drinke, and all bodily foode, and pleasures, from the body as before: First, that we ought to fast is a trueth more manifest, then that it should here neede to be proued, the Scriptures which teach the same are euident. The doubt therefore that is, is whether when we fast, we ought to withhold from our bodies all meate and drinke during the time of our fast, or no? That we ought so to doe, may be wel gathered vpon a question mooued by the Pharises to Christ, and by his answere againe to the same. Why (say they) doe Johns Disciples fast often, and pray, and wee likewise? but thy disciples eate and drinke, and fast not at all? In this smooth question, they couche vp subtilly this argument or reason.

Iudg.20.

Luke 5.

Who

who so fasteth not, that man is not of God, for fasting and praier, are workes both commended, and commanded of God in his Scriptures: and al good men from Moses till this time, a'wel the Prophets as others, haue exercised them selues in these workes. Iohn also and his disciples at this day doe fast oft, and pray much, and so doe we the Pharises in like maner: But thy disciples fast not at all, which if thou wilt denie, we can easily proue it. For whosoeuer eateth and drinketh, fasteth not: Thy disciples eate and drinke, therefore they fast not. Of this wee conclude, say they, necessarily, that neither art thou, nor thy disciples of God. Christ maketh answere, saying, Can yee make that the children of the wedding shall fast, while the bridegrome is with them? The dayes shall come when the bridegrome shall be taken from them: In those dayes shall they fast. Our Sauiour Christ like a good master defendeth the innocencie of his disciples, against the malice of the arrogant Pharises, and prooueth that his disciples are not guiltie of transgressing any iot of Gods lawe, although as then they fasted not, and in his answere reproueth the Pharises of superstition, and ignorance. Superstition, because they put a religion in their doings, and ascribed holinesse to the outwarde worke wrought, not regarding to what ende fasting is ordeyned. Of ignorance, for that they coulde not discerne betweene time and time. They knowe not that there is a time of reioycing & mirth, and a time againe of lamentation and mourning, which both he teacheth in his answere, as shalbe touched more largely hereafter, when wee shall shewe what time is most fit to fast in.

But here beloued, let vs note that our Sauiour

Christ in making his answere to their question, denyed not, but confessed that his disciples fasted not, and therefore agreeth to the Pharises in this, as vnto a manifest trueth: that who so eateth and drinketh fasteth not. Fasting then, euen by Christs assent, is a withholding of meate, drinke, and all naturall foode from the body, for the determined time of fasting. And that it was vsed in the primatiue Church, appeareth most euidently by the Chalcedon Councile, one of the foure first generall Counciles. The Fathers assembled there to the number of fiue hundreth and thirtie, considering with them selues, howe acceptable a thing fasting is to God, when it is vsed according to his worde. Againe, hauing before their eyes also, the great abuse of the same crept into the Church at those dayes, through the negligence of them, which shoulde haue taught the people the right vse thereof, and by vayne glosses, deuised of men: to reforme the sayd abuses, and to restore this so good and godly a woorke, to the true vse thereof, decreed in that Councile, that euery person, as well in his priuate as publike fast, should continue all the day without meate and drinke, till after the Euening prayer. And whosoeuer dyd eate or drinke before the Euening prayer was ended, shoulde be accompted and reputed, not to consider the puritie of his fast. This Canon teacheth so euidently how fasting was vsed in the Primatiue Church, as by wordes it can not bee more plainely expressed. Fasting then by the decree of those fiue hundreth and thirtie fathers, grounding their determination in this matter, vpon the sacred Scriptures, & long continued vsage, or practise both of the Prophets & other godly persons, before the comming of Christ, and also of the

Apostles

Apostles and other deuoute men in the new Testament, is a withholding of meate, drinke, and all naturall foode from the body, for the determined time of fasting. Thus much is spoken hitherto, to make playne vnto you what fasting is. Nowhereafter shalbe shewed the true and right vse of fasting.

Good workes are not all of one sort: for some are of them selues and of their owne proper nature alwayes good: as to loue God aboue all things, to loue my neighbour as my selfe, to honour father & mother, to honour the higher powers, to giue to euery man that which is his due, & such like. Other workes there be, which considered in themselues, without further respect, are of their owne nature meere indifferent, that is, neither good, nor euill, but take their Denomination of the vse or ende, whereunto they serue. Which workes, hauing a good end, are called good works, and are so in deede: but yet that commeth not of themselues, but of the good ende whereunto they are referred. On the other side, if the ende that they serue vnto be euill, it cãnot then otherwise be, but that they must needes be euil also. Of this sort of works, is fasting, which of it selfe is a thing meerely indifferent, but is made better or worse by the end that it serueth vnto. For when it respecteth a good ende, it is a good worke: but the ende being euill, the worke it selfe is also euill, as it appeareth in the 58. Chapter of the Prophet Esaias.

Nowe dearely beloued, seeing that almightie God alloweth not our fast for the workes sake, but chiefly respecteth our heart howe it is affected, and then esteemeth our fast either good or euill, by the ende that it serueth for: It is our part to rent our heartes, and not our garments, as we are aduerti-

sed by the Prophet Joel, that is, our sorow & mourning must bee inward in the heart and not in the outward shew onely, yea it is requisite that first before all things wee cleanse our hearts from sinne, and then to direct our fast to such an ende, as God will allowe to be good.

There be sowre endes, whereunto if our fast bee directed, it is then a worke profitable to vs, and accepted of God.

The first is to chastice the flesh, that it bee not too wanton, but tamed and brought in subiection to the spirit. This respect hath Saint Paul in his fast, when he sayde: I chastice my body, and bring it into subiection, lest by any meanes it commeth to passe, that when I haue preached to other, I my selfe be found a castaway.

1.Cor.9.

The second, that the spirit may be more feruent, and earnest in prayer. To this end fasted the Prophets & teachers that were at Antioch, before they sent forth Paul & Barnabas to preach the Gospell. The same two Apostles fasted for the like purpose, when they commended to God, by their earnest prayers, the congregations that were at Antioch, Pisidia, Iconium, and Listris, as wee reade in the Acts of the Apostles.

Actes 13.

Actes 14.

The third, that our fast be a testimony and witnesse with vs before God, of our humble submission to his high Maiestie, when we confesse & acknowledge our sinnes vnto him, & are inwardly touched with sorowfulnesse of heart, bewayling the same in the affliction of our bodies.

The fourth, that by sparing from our selues, we may bee the better able to helpe and releeue the necessitie of others. Which end is also specified in the 58. of the Prophet Esaias. These are the endes or

right

right vses of fasting.

Now shal be shewed briefely, what time is meete for fasting: for al times serue not for all things. But as the wise man saith, All thinges haue their times. There is a time to weepe, & a time againe to laugh, a time to mourne and a time to reioyce. Our Sauiour Christ excused his Disciples, and reproued the Pharisees, because they neither regarded the vse of fasting, nor considered what time was meete for the same. Which both he teacheth in his answere, saying, The children of the mariage cannot mourne while the bridegrome is with thé. Their question was of fasting: his answer is of mourning, signifying vnto them plainely, that the outwarde fast of the bodie is no fast before God, except it be accompanied with the inward fast, which is a mourning and a lamentation in the heart, as is before declared. Concerning the time of fasting, he sayeth, The daies will come, when the bridegrome shall be taken from them, in those dayes they shall fast. By this it is manifest, that it is no time of fasting, while the mariage lasteth, and the bridegrome is there present. But when the mariage is ended, and the bridegrome gone, then is it a meete time to faste. Nowe to make plaine vnto you, what is the sense and meaning of these wordes, We are at the marriage, and againe the bridegrome is taken from vs. Ye shall note, that so long as God reuealeth his mercie vnto vs, and giueth vs of his benefites, either spirituall or corporall, we are saide to be with the bridegrome at the mariage. So was that good olde father Iacob at the mariage, when he vnderstoode that his sonne Ioseph was aliue, and ruled all Egypt vnder king Pharao. So was Dauid in the mariage with the bridegrome, when hee

Math.9.

Math.9. Luke.5.

had gotten the victorie of great Goliah, and had smitten off his head. Judith and all the people of Bethulia, were the children of the wedding and had the bridegrome with them, when God had by the hand of a woman slaine Holofernes the grand captaine of the Assyrians hoste, and discomfited all their enemies. Thus were the Apostles the children of the mariage, whyle Christe was corporally present with them, and defended them from all dangers, both spirituall and corporall. But the mariage is sayd then to be ended, and the bridegrome to be gone, when almightie God smiteth vs with affliction, and seemeth to leaue vs in the middest of a number of aduersities. So God sometime striketh priuate men priuately with sundry aduersities, as trouble of minde, losse of friendes, losse of goods, long and daungerous sickenesses, &c. Then is it a fit time for that man to humble himselfe to Almighty God by fasting, and to mourne, and bewaile his sinnes, with a sorrowfull heart, and to pray vnfaynedly, saying with the Prophet Da-
Psalm.51. uid, Turne away thy face, O Lorde, from my sinnes, and blot out of thy remembraunce all mine offences. Againe, when God shall afflict a whole Region, or countrie, with warres, with famine and dearth of victualles, with pestilence, with strange diseases and vnknowne sickenesses, and other such like calamities: then is it time for all states and sortes of people, high and lowe, men, women and children, to humble themselues by fasting, and bewaile their sinnefull liuing before God, and pray with one common voyce, saying thus, or some other such like prayer: Be fauourable, O Lord, be fauourable vnto thy people, which turneth vnto thee in weeping, fasting and praying: Spare thy people whom

thou

thou hast redeemed with thy precious bloud, and suffer not thine inheritance to be destroyed and brought to confusion.

Fasting thus vsed with prayer, is of great efficacie, & weigheth much with God: so the Angel Raphael tolde Tobias. It also appeareth by that which our Sauiour Christ answered to his disciples, demaunding of him why they couldе not cast forth the euill spirite out of him that was brought vnto them: This kinde (sayth he) is not cast out but by fasting and prayer. How auaileable fast is, howe much it weigheth with God, and what it is able to obtaine at his hand, cannot better be set forth then by opening vnto you and laying before you some of those notable thinges, that haue bene brought to passe by it. Fasting was one of the meanes, whereby Almightie God was occasioned to alter ỏ tyding which he had purposed concerning Ahab, for murthering the innocent man Naboth to possesse his vineyarde. The like is to be seene in the Ninuites: For whẽ God had determined to destroy the whole Citie of Niniue, and the time which he had appointed was euen nowe at hande, he sent the Prophet Ionas to say vnto them, Yet fourtie dayes, and Niniue shall be ouerthrowen. The people by and by beleeued God, and gaue themselues to fasting, yea, the King by the aduice of the Counsell, caused to be proclaymed, saying. Let neither man, nor beast, bullocke, nor sheepe taste any thing, neither feede, nor drinke water: but let man & beast put on sackecloth, & crye mightily vnto God: yea, let euery man turne from his euil way, & from the wickednes that is in their hãds. Who can tel if God wil turne & repẽt, & turne away frõ his fierce wrath, that we perish not? And vpon this their heartie repentance, thus declared outwardly

with fasting, renting of their clothes, putting on sackecloth, and sprinkeling themselues with dust and ashes, the Scripture sayeth, God sawe their workes that they turned from their euil wayes, and God repented of the euill, that he had said that he would doe vnto them, and he did it not. Let vs therefore (dearely beloued) seing there are many more causes of fasting & mourning in these our dayes, then hath bene of many yeeres heretofore, as well in respect of the tumults and warres, almost in euery place stirred vp against the professers of the Gospell of Christ, as also of the scarcitie and dearth of victuals now present, endeuour our selues, both inwardly in our hearts, and also outwardly with our bodyes, diligently to exercise this godly exercise of fasting, in such sort and maner, as the holy Prophets, the Apostles and diuers other deuoute persons for their time, vsed the same. God is now the same God that was then: God that loueth righteousnesse, and that hateth iniquitie: God which willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he turne from his wickednesse, and liue: God that hath promised to turne to vs, if we refuse not to turne vnto him: yea, if we turne our euill workes from before his eyes, cease to doe euill, learne to doe well, seeke to doe right, relieue the oppressed, be a right iudge to the fatherlesse, defend the widowe, breake our bread to the hungry, bring the poore that wander, into our house, clothe the naked, and despise not our brother, which is our owne flesh. Then shalt thou call (sayth the Prophet) and the Lord shall answere: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. Yea, God which heard Ahab, and the Ninuites, and spared them, wil also heare our prayers and spare vs, so that wee after their exam-

ple,

ple will vnfayredly turne vnto him: yea, hee will blesse vs with his heauenly benedictions the time that we haue to tarrie in this worlde, and after the race of this mortall life, he will bring vs to his heauenly kingdome, where we shall raigne in euerlasting blessednes with our sauiour Christ, to whom with the Father and the holy Ghost, be all honour and glorie, for euer and euer. Amen.

An Homilie of Almes deedes and mercifulnesse towarde the poore & needy.

AMongst the manifolde dueties that Almightie God requireth of his faythful seruants the true Christians, by the which hee woulde ẏ both his name shoulde be glorified, and the certaintie of their vocation declared: there is none that is eyther more acceptable vnto him, or more profitable for them, then are the woorkes of mercy and pitie shewed vpon the poore which bee afflicted with any kinde of miserie, especially in the time of any publique calamitie, as at this present in respect of the want and scarcitie of thinges necessarie for the sustentation of mans life, which without the great goodnesse of God, is like to bee greater.

First therefore, I will shewe howe earnestly Almightie God in his holy word doeth exacte the doing of Almes deedes of vs, and howe acceptable they be vnto him.

Secondly, how profitable it is for vs to vse them, and what commoditie and fruit they will bring vnto vs.

Thirdly, and last I will shew out of Gods word, that who so is liberall to the poore, and relieueth them plenteously, shall notwithstanding haue sufficient for him selfe, and euermore be without danger of penury and scarcitie.

Concerning the first, which is the acceptation, & dignitie or price of Almes deedes before God, know this, that to helpe and succour the poore in their neede and miserie, pleaseth God so much, that as the holy Scripture in sundrie places recorderh, nothing can be more thankefully taken or accepted of God. For first we reade that almightie God doth account that to bee giuen, and to be bestowed vpon himselfe, that is bestowed vpon the poore. For so doth the holy Ghost testifie vnto vs by the wise man

Prou.19. saying: He that hath pitie vpon the poore, lendeth vnto the Lord himselfe. And Christ in the Gospell aduoucheth, and as a most certaine trueth bindeth it with an oth, that the almes bestowed vpon ye poore, was bestowed vpon him, and so shalbe reckoned at the last day. For thus hee saieth to the charitable almes giuers, when hee sitteth as iudge in the doome to giue sentence of euery man according to

Matth.25. his desertes: Verely I say vnto you, Whatsoeuer good and mercifull deede you did vpon any of the least of these my brethren, yee did the same vnto me: in releeuing their hunger, yee releeued mine: in quenching their thirst, ye quenched mine: in clothing them, ye clothed me: and when ye harboured them, ye lodged me also: when ye visited them, being sicke or in prison, ye visited me. The holy Apostles and Disciples of Christ, who by reason of his

daily

daily conuersation, sawe by his deedes, and heard in his doctrine howe much he tendered the poore: the godly fathers also, that were both before, and since Christ, indued without doubt with the holy Ghost, and most certainely certified of Gods holy will: they both do most earnestly exhorte vs, and in all their writings almost continually admonish vs, that we would remember the poore, and bestowe our charitable Almes vpon them. Saint Paule crieth vnto vs after this sort, Comfort the feeble minded, lift vp the weake, and be charitable toward all men. And againe, To doe good to the poore, and to distribute almes gladly, see that thou doe not forget: for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Esaie the Prophet teacheth on this wise, Deale thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poore wandring home to thy house. When thou seest the naked, see thou cloth him, and hide not thy face from thy poore neighbour, neither despise thou thine owne flesh. And the holy Father Tobie giueth this counsell, Giue almes (saith he) of thine owne goods, and turne neuer thy face from the poore, eate thy bread with the hungry, and couer the naked with thy clothes. And the learned and godly Doctor Chrisostome, giueth this admonition, Let merciful Almes bee alwayes with vs as a garment, that is, as mindefull as we will be to put our garments vpon vs to couer our nakednesse, to defend vs from the cold, and to shewe our selues comely: So mindefull let vs be at all times and seasons that we giue Almes to the poore, and shewe our selues merciful towards them. But what meane these often admonitions, and earnest exhortations of the Prophets, Apostles, Fathers, and holy Doctors? Sureely as they were faithfull to Godward, and therefore discharged their duetie truely, in tel-

1.Thess.5.

Heb.13.

Esaie.58.

Tobit.4.

Ad popul. Antio. Ho.35.

ling vs what was Gods will: so of a singular loue to vs ward, they laboured not onely to enforme vs, but also to perswade with vs, that to giue Almes, and to succour the poore and needie, was a very acceptable thing and an high sacrifice to God, wherein he greatly delyted, and had a singular pleasure. For so doeth the wise man ỳ sonne of Sirach teach vs, saying, Who so is mercifull and giueth almes, he offereth the right thanke offring. And he addeth thereunto, The right thanke offring maketh the Altar fat, & a sweete smel is it before the highest: it is acceptable before God, and shall neuer be forgotten. And the trueth of this docrine is verified by the examples of those holy and charitable fathers, of whome we reade in the Scriptures, that they were giuen to merciful compassion towardes the poore, and charitable relieuing of their necessities. Such a one was Abraham, in whom God had so great pleasure, that he vouchsafed to come vnto him in forme of an Angell, and to be enterteined of him at his house. Such was his kinsman Loth, whō God so fauoured for receiuing his messengers into his house, which otherwise should haue laine in the streate, that he saued him with his whole family from the destruction of Sodome and Gomorra. Such were the holy fathers Job and Tobie, with many others, who felt most sensible proofs of Gods especiall loue towardes them. And as all these by their mercifulnesse and tender compassion which they shewed to the miserable afflicted members of Christ, in the relieuing, helping and succouring them with their temporall goodes in this life, obtained Gods fauour and were deare, acceptable and pleasant in his sight: so nowe they themselues take pleasure in the fruition of God, in the pleasant

Eccle. 35.

faint ioyes of heauen, and are also in Gods eternal worde set before vs, as perfect examples euer before our eyes, both howe wee shall please God in this our mortall lyfe, and also howe wee may come to liue in ioye with them in euerlasting pleasure & felicitie. For most true is that saying, which Saint Augustine hath, that the giuing of Almes & reliueing of the poore, is the right way to heauen, *Via cœli pauper est*, The poore man, sayeth he, is the way to heauen. Our Sauiour Christe testifieth of poore men, that they are deare vnto him, and that he loueth them especially: for he calleth thē his litle ones by a name of tender loue, he saith they be his brethren. And S. James saith, ẏ God hath chosen them to bee heires of his kingdome, Hath not God (saith he) chosen the poore of this worlde to him selfe to make them heereafter the rich heires of that kingdome, which hee hath promised to them that loue him? And wee knowe that the prayer which they make for vs shalbe acceptable and regarded of God, their complaint shall be heard also. Thereof doeth Iesus the sonne of Sirach certainly assure vs, saying, If the poore complaine of thee in the bitternes of his soule, his prayer shall be heard, euen hee that made him, shall heare him. Bee curteous therefore vnto the poore. We know also, ẏ he, who acknowledgeth himself to be their master and patron, and refuseth not to take them for his seruants, is both able to pleasure and displeasure vs, and that we stand euery houre in neede of his helpe. Why should we then be eyther negligent or vnwilling to procure their friendship and fauour, by the which also we may be assured to get his fauour that is both able and willing to do vs all pleasures that are for our commoditie and wealth? Christ doeth declare by this how

Iames.2.

Eccle.4.

much he accepteth our charitable affection toward the poore, in that he promiseth a reward vnto them that giue but a cuppe of colde water in his name to them that haue neede thereof, and that rewarde is the kingdome of heauen. No doubt is it therefore, but that God regardeth highly, that which he rewardeth so liberally, for he ẏ promiseth a princely recompence for a beggerly beneuolence, declareth that hee is more delighted with the giuing then with the gift, and that hee as much esteemeth the doing of the thing, as the fruite and commoditie that commeth of it. Who so therefore hath hitherto neglected to giue Almes, let him knowe that God nowe requireth it of him, and hee that hath bene liberall to the poore, let him knowe that his godly doings are accepted, and thankfully taken at Gods handes, which he will requite with double and treble: for so saith the wise man, He which sheweth mercie to the poore, doeth laye his money in banke to the Lord, for a large interest and gaine. The gaine being chiefly the possession of the life euerlasting through the merites of our Sauiour Iesus Christe, to whome with the father and the holy Ghost bee all honour and glory for euer. Amen.

The second part of the Sermon of Almes deedes.

YE haue heard before (dearely beloued) that to giue Almes vnto ẏ poore, ẏ to helpe them in time of necessitie is so acceptable vnto our Sauiour Christ, that hee counteth that to bee done to himselfe, that we do for his sake vnto them. Ye haue heard also howe earnestly both the Apostles, Prophets,

phets, holy fathers, and doctours do exhort vs vnto the same. And ye see, howe welbeloued and deare vnto God they were, whom the Scriptures report vnto vs to haue ben good almes men. Wherefore, if eyther their good examples, or the holsome counsell of the godly fathers, or the lawe of Christ, whose especiall fauour we may be assured by this meanes to obtaine, may moue vs, or do any thing at al with vs: Let vs prouide that from henceforth we shewe vnto Godward this thankeful seruice, to be mindeful and ready to helpe them that be poore and in misery. Now will I this second time, that I intreate of Almes deedes, shewe vnto you, how profitable it is for vs to exercise them, and what frute thereby shall rise vnto vs if wee doe them faithfully. Our Sauiour Christ in the Gospel teacheth vs, that it profiteth a man nothing to haue in possession all the riches of the whole worlde, and the wealth or glory therof: if in the meane season he lose his soule, or do that thing whereby it should become captiue vnto death, sinne, & hell fire. By the which saying he not onely instructeth vs howe much the soules health is to be preferred before worldly commodities: but also seruieth to stirre vp our mindes, and to pricke vs forwards to seek diligently, and learne by what meanes we may preserue and keepe our soules euer in safetie, that is, how we may recouer their health, if it bee lost or impayred, and howe it may be defended and maintayned, if we once haue it: yea, hee teacheth vs also thereby to esteeme that as a precious medicine, and an inestimable iewell that hath suche strength and vertue in it, that can eyther procure or preserue so incomparable a treasure. For if we greatly regarde that medicine or salue, that is able to heale sundry and grieuous

Matth. 16.

diseases of the body: much more will wee esteeme that which hath like power ouer the soule. And because wee might bee better assured, both to knowe and haue in readinesse that so profitable a remedie: hee, as a most faythfull and louing teacher, sheweth him selfe both what it is, and where wee may finde it, and howe wee may vse and applie it. For when both he and his disciples were grieuously accused of the Pharises to haue defiled their soules, in breaking the constitutions of the elders: because they went to meate and washed not their handes before, according to the custome of the Iewes: Christ answering their superstitious complaynt, teacheth them an especiall remedie howe to keepe cleane their soules: Giue almes (sayth he) and beholde, all thinges are cleane vnto you. He teacheth them, that to be merciful and charitable in helping the poore, is the meanes to keepe the soule pure and cleane in the sight of God. We are taught therefore by this, that merciful almes dealing is profitable to purge the soule from the infection and filthie spots of sinne. The same lesson doeth the holy Ghost also teache in sundry places of ẏ Scripture, saying, Mercifulnesse and almes giuing purgeth from all sinnes, and deliuereth from death, and suffereth not the soule to come into darkenesse. A great confidence may they haue before the high God, that shewe mercie and compassion to them that are afflicted. The wise Preacher the sonne of Sirach confirmeth the same when he sayeth, That as water quencheth burning fire, euen so mercie and almes resisteth and reconcileth sinnes. But here some will say vnto me, If almes giuing, and our charitable woorkes towardes the poore, bee able to wash away sinnes, to reconcile vs to God, to deliuer vs from the perill

Luke.12.

Tob.4.

Eccle.5.

of

of damnation, and make vs the sonnes and heires of Gods kingdome: then is Christes merite defaced, and his blood shed in vaine: then are wee iustified by workes, and by our deedes may we merite heauen: then doe we in vayne beleeue that Christ dyed for to put away our sinnes, and that he rose for our iustification, as Saint Paul teacheth. But ye shal vnderstande (dearely beloued) that neyther those places of Scripture before aleadged, neyther any other godly and learned man (when they in extolling the dignitie, profite, fruite and effect of vertuous and liberall almes, doe say that it washeth away sinnes, & bringeth vs to the fauour of God) doe meane that our worke and charitable deede, is the original cause of our acceptation before God: or that for the dignitie or worthinesse thereof, our sinnes be washed away, and we purged and cleansed of all the spottes of our iniquitie, (for that were in deede to deface Christ, and to defraude him of his glory) but they meane this, and this is the vnderstanding of those and such like sayings, That God of his mercy and especiall fauour towardes them whome hee hath appointed to euerlasting saluation, hath so offered his grace effectually, and they haue so receiued it fruitefully, that although by reason of their sinnefull liuing outwardly, they seemed before to haue bene the children of wrath and perdition: yet nowe the spirite of God mighttily working in them vnto obedience of Gods will and commandementes, they declare by their outwarde deedes and lyfe in the shewing of mercy and charity (which can not come but of the spirite of God, and his especiall grace) that they are the vndoubted children of God, appointed to euerlasting life. And so, as by their wickednesse

& vngodly liuing, they shewed themselues accordingto the iudgement of men, which followe the outwarde appearance, to be reprobates and castawayes: So nowe by their obedience vnto Gods holy will and by their mercifulnesse and tender pitie (wherein they shewe themselues to bee like vnto God, who is the fountayne and spring of all mercy) they declare openly and manifestly vnto the sight of men, that they are the sonnes of God, and elect of him vnto saluation. For as the good fruite is not the cause that the tree is good, but the tree must first bee good, before it can bring forth good fruite: so the good deedes of man, are not the cause that make the man good, but hee is first made good by the Spirite and grace of God, that effectually worketh in him, and afterwarde hee bringeth foorth good fruites. And then as the good fruite doeth argue the goodnesse of the tree: so doeth the good and merciful deede of the man argue and certaynely proue the goodnesse of him that doeth it, according to Christes saying, Yee shall knowe them by their fruites. The meaning of these sayinges in the Scriptures, and other holy writings: Almes deeds do wash away our sinnes, & mercy to thepoore doth blod out our offences, is, that we doing these thinges according to Gods wil & our duety, haue our sinnes in deede washed away, & our offences blotted out, not for the worthines of them, but by the grace of God which worketh all in all, and that for ẏ promise that God hath made to them that are obedient to his commaundement, that he which is the truth might be iustified in performing the truth due to his promise. Almes deedes do wash away our sinnes, because God doth vouchsafe them to reputte vs as cleane and pure, when we doe them

for his sake, and not because they deserue or merite our purging, or for that they haue any such strength and vertue in themselues. The godly do learne that when the Scriptures say that by good and merciſull workes we are reconciled to Gods fauour, we are taught then to know what Christ by his interession and mediation, obtaineth for vs of his father, when we be obedient to his will, yea, they learne in such maners of speaking, a comfortable argument of Gods singuler fauour and loue, that attributeth that vnto vs, and to our doings, that be by his spirite worketh in vs, and through his grace procureth for vs. And yet this notwithstanding, they cris out with Saint Paule, Oh wretches that we are, and acknowledge (as Christ teacheth) that when they haue all done, they are but vnprofitable seruants. And with the blessed king David in respect of the iust iudgements of God, they do tremble and say, Who shall bee able to abide it Lorde, if thou wilt giue sentence according to our desertes. Thus they humble themselues, and are exalted of God: they count themselues vile, and of God are counted pure and cleane: they condemne themselues, and are iustified of God: they thinke themselues vnworthy of the earth, and of God are thought worthy of heauen. Thus of Gods word are they truely taught how to thinke rightly of merciſull dealing of almes, and of Gods especiall mercie and goodneſſe are made partakers of those fruites that his worde hath promised. Let vs then followe their examples, and both shewe obediently in our life those workes of mercie that we are commaunded, and haue that right opinion and iudgement of them that we are taught, and we shall in like maner as they, be made partakers, and feele the fruites and rewardes that

followe such godly liuing. So shall we knowe by proofe, what profite and commoditie doeth come of giuing almes, and succouring of the poore.

The third part of the Homilie of Almes deedes.

YE haue already heard two parts of this treatise of Almes deedes. The first, howe pleasant and acceptable before God the doing of them is. The second, how much it behouetth vs, and how profitable it is to apply our selues vnto them. Howe in this third part, will I take away that let, that hindereth many from doing of them. There be many, that when they heare how acceptable a thing in the sight of God the giuing of almes is, and how much God extendeth his fauour towardes them that are merciful, and what fruites and commodities doth come to them by it: they wish very gladly with themselues, that they also might obtaine these benefites, & be counted such of God, as whom he would loue or do for. But yet these men are with greedy couetousnesse so pulled backe, that they will not bestowe one halfepeny, or one shiue of bread, that they might bee thought worthie of Gods benefites, and so to come into his fauour. For they are euermore fearefull and doubting, lest by often giuing, although it were but a litle at a time, they shoulde consume their goods, & so imponerish themselues, that euen themselues at the length, shoulde not be able to liue, but shoulde be driuen to begge, and liue of other mens almes. And thus they seeke excuses to withhold themselues from the fauour of God, & chose with pinching couetousnes,

nes, rather to leaue vnto the deuill, then by charitable mercifulnes, either to come vnto Christ, or to suffer Christ to come vnto them. Oh that we had some cunning and skilfull Physition, that were able to purge them of this so pestilent an humor, that so sore infecteth, not their bodies but their mindes, and so by corrupting their soules bringeth their bodies and soules into danger of hell fire.

Howe, least there be any such among vs (dearely beloued) let vs diligently searche for that Physition, which is Iesus Christ, and earnestly labour, that of his mercy he will truely instruct vs, and giue vs a present medicine against so perilous a disease. Speaken then, whosoeuer thou art, that feareſt lest by giuing to the poore thou shouldest bring thy selfe to beggery. That which thou takeſt from thy selfe, to bestow vpon Christ, can neuer be consumed & wasted away. Wherein thou shalt not beleeue me: But if thou haue faith, and be a true Christian, beleeue the holy Ghost, giue credite to the authoritie of Gods worde, that thus teacheth. For thus sayth the holy Ghost by Salomon: He that gineth vnto the poore, shall neuer want. Men suppose that by hoarding and laying vp still, they shall at the length be riche: and that by distributing and laying out, although it be for most necessary & godly vses, they shalbe brought to pouertie. But the holy Ghost which knoweth all trueth, teacheth vs another lesson contrary to this. He teacheth vs, that there is a kinde of dispending, that shal neuer diminish the stocke, and a kinde of sauing, that shal bring a man to extreme pouertie. Prou. 28.

For where he saith that the good almes man shal neuer haue scarcitie, he addeth: But he that turneth away his eyes from such as be in necessitie, shall suffer great pouertie himselfe. How farre different than,

is the iudgement of man, from the iudgement of the holy ghost?

The holy Apostle Paule, a man full of the holy Ghost, & made priuie euen of the secret Will of God, teacheth, that the liberal almes giuer, shall not thereby be impouerished. He that ministreth (saith he) seed vnto the sower, will minister also breade vnto you for foode, yea, he wil multiplie your seede, and increase the fruites of your righteousnes. He is not content heere to aduertise them, that they shall not lacke: but hee sheweth them also, after what sort God wil prouide for them. Euen as he prouideth seede for the sower, in multiplying it, and giuing great increase: so will he multiply their goodes & increase them, that there shall be great abundance.

And lest we shoulde thinke his sayings to be but words and not truth, we haue an example thereof in the third Booke of kings, which doth confirme and seale it vp as a most certaine truth. The poore widowe that receiued the banished Prophet of God Elias, when as she had but an handful of meale in a vessell, and a little oyle in a cruse, whereof she would make a cake for her selfe & her sonne, that after they had eaten that, they might die, because in that great famine there was no more foode to be gotten: yet when she gaue part thereof vnto Elias, and defrauded her owne hungrie belly, mercifully to relieue him, she was so blessed of God, that neither ♀ meale nor the oyle was consumed, all the time while that famine did last, but thereof both the Prophet Elias, she, and her sonne, were sufficiently nourished & had ynough.

Oh consider this example, ye vnbeleeuing & faithlesse couetous persons, who discredit Gods worde, and thinke his power diminished. This poore wo-

man

man in the time of an extreme and long dearth, had but one handfull of meale, and a little cruse of oyle: her oneiy sonne was readie to perish before her face for hunger, and she her selfe like to pine away: and yet when the poore Prophet came and asked part, she was so mindfull of mercifulnesse, that she forgat her owne miserie, and rather then she would omit the occasion giuen to giue almes, and worke a worke of righteoulnes, she was content presently, to hazard her owne, and her sonnes life.

This poore and silly widowe, neuer cast doubtes in al her miserie, what want she herselfe should haue, she neuer distrusted the promise that God had made vnto her by the Prophet, but straight way went about to relieue the hungry prophet of God, yea, preferring his necessitie before her owne. But we, like vnbeleeuing wretches, before we will giue one myte, we will cast a thousand doubts of danger, whether that will stand vs in any steade that we giue to the poore, whether we should not haue neede of it at any other time our selues, & whether it would not haue bene more profitably bestowed other wayes. So that it is not more hard to wrench a strōg nayle (as the prouerbe saith) out of a poste, thē to wring a farthing out of our fingers. There is neither the feare nor the loue of God before our eyes, we will more esteeme a myte, thē we either desire Gods kingdome, or feare the diuels dungeon. Hearken therefore ye mercilesse misers, what will be the ende of this your vnmercifull dealing. As certainely as God nourished this poore widow in the time of famine, and increased her little store, so that she had inough and felt no penury, when other pined away: so certainly shal God plague you with pouertie in ꝑ middes of plentie. Then when other haue abundance and be fedde

to the full, you shal vtterly wast and consume away your selues, your store shalbe destroyed, your goods pluckt from you, all your glory and wealth shall perish: and that which when you had, you might haue enioyed your selues in peace, and might haue bestowed vpon other most godly, ye shal seeke with sorowe and sighes, & no where shall finde it. For your vnmercifulnesse towardes other, ye shall finde no man that will shewe mercy towards you. You that had stonie hearts towards others, shall finde all the creatures of God to youwardes as hard as brasse & yron. Alas, what furie & madnes doeth possesse our minds, that in a matter of trueth & certainty we wil not giue credite to the truth, testifying vnto ẏ which is most certaine? Christ sayth, that if wee will first seeke the kingdome of God, & do the workes of righteousnes therof, we shal not be left destitute, al other things shalbe giuen to vs plenteously. Nay say we, I will first looke that I be able to liue my selfe, and be sure that I haue ynough for me and mine, and if I haue any thing ouer, I wil bestow it to get Gods fauour, and the poore shall then haue part with me. See, I pray you, the peruerse iudgement of men. We haue more care to nourish the carcase, then we haue feare to see our soule perish. And as Cyprian saith, Whilest we stand in doubt lest our goods fadle; in beyng ouer liberall, we put it out of doubt, that our life and health faileth, in not being liberal at all. Whilest we are carefull for diminishing of our stock, we are altogether careless to diminish our selues. We loue Mammon, & loose our soules. We feare least our patrimonie should perish from vs, but we feare not lest we shoulde perish for it. Thus doe we peruersly loue that we shoulde hate, and hate that we should loue. We be negligent, where we shoulde be carefull,

Sermon. de Eleemosina.

carefull, and carefull, where we neede not. This vayne feare, to lacke our selues if we giue to ꝑ poore, is much like the feare of children and fooles, which when they see the bright glimcing of a glasse, they do imagine straightway that it is the lightning, and yet the brightnesse of a glasse neuer was the lightning. Euen so when we imagine that by spending vpon the poore, a man may come to pouertie, we are cast into a vaine feare: for we neuer heard nor knew, that by that meanes any man came to miserie, and was left destitute, and not considered of God. Nay we reade to the contrary in the scripture, (as I haue before shewed, and as by infinite Testimonies and examples may be proued) that whosoeuer serueth God faithfully and vnfainedly in any vocation, God wil not suffer him to decay, much lesse to perish. The holy Ghost teacheth vs by Salomon, that the Lorde will not suffer the soule of the righteous to perish for hunger. And therefore Dauid sayeth vnto all them that are merciful, O feare the Lorde ye that bee his saintes, for they that feare him want nothing. The lions doe lacke and suffer hunger, but they which seeke the Lord, shall want no maner of thing that is good. When Elias was in the desert, God fed him by the ministerie of a Rauen, that euening and morning brought him sufficient victuals. When Daniel was shut vp in the lyons denne, God prepared meate for him, and sent it thither to him. And there was the saying of Dauid fulfilled, The lyons do lacke and suffer hunger, but they which seeke the Lorde, shall want no good thing. For while the lyons which should haue bene fead with his flesh, roared for hunger, and desire of their pray, whereof they had no power, although it were present before them: he in the meane time was fresh fed from God, that shoulde with his flesh haue filled

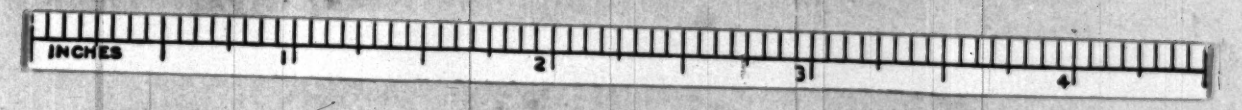
Pro.10.

3.Reg.17.

filled the lyons. How mightily doeth God worke to preserue and maintaine those whome he loueth, so carefull is he also to sede them, whom any state or occasion doe wilfully seruie him. And shall wee now thinke that he will be vnmindefull of vs, if we be obedient to his worde, and according to his will haue pitie vpon the poore? He giueth vs all wealth, before we doe any seruice for it: And will he see vs to lacke necessaries, when we do him true seruice? Can a man think that he that feedeth Christ, can be forsaken of Christ, and left without foode? Or will Christ deny earthly things vnto them, whome hee promiseth heauenly thinges for his true seruice? It can not be therefore (deare brethren) that by giuing of almes, we should at any time want our selues, or that we which releeue other mens needes, should our selues be oppressed with penurie. It is contrary to Gods worde: it repugneth vnto his promise: it is against Christes properties and nature whom we serue: it is the craftie furmide of the deuill to perswade vs it. Wherefore sticke not to giue almes freely, and notwithstanding, that God graciously will minister vnto vs sufficiency and plentie, so long as wee shall liue in this transitorie life, and after our bodies here well spent in his seruice, [illegible] then, we shall [illegible] vie, to reigne [illegible] in heaven: to whome with the Father and the holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for euer.

Amen.

FINIS.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